

# Dreaming of an Inclusive Library

- Rev. Janelle Hooper, Program Manager for Ministry with Children for the ELCA, B.A. in African-American Studies from UT Austin,  
*See more of her work at: [evescuriousgarden.org](http://evescuriousgarden.org)*



Books are being banned at an alarming rate. The majority of books are by or about BIPOC/LGBTQ+ topics. Clearly books are powerful and are used to discriminate. I dream of a library that engages children to see themselves as powerful and capable of learning how to live into **MLK's DREAM**.

I'll present the modern context for: book banning, a short overview of past book bans, strategies to deal with them, recommended books (that might be on the banned list) and most importantly what role our faith has to say about books.

Top 13 Most Challenged Books of 2022 are evidence of a growing, well-organized political movement, the goals of which include removing books about:

race, history, gender identity, sexuality, and reproductive health from America's public and school libraries that do not meet their approval. Using social media and other channels, these groups distribute book lists to their local chapters and individuals, who then utilize the lists to initiate a mass challenge that can empty the shelves of a library.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10>

## **Book bans across America are steadily increasing,**

and this form of censorship is a direct threat to democracy and our constitutional rights.

In 2022, the American Library Association reported the highest number of attempted book bans in the last 20 years.

Despite this trend, **70% of parents in America are opposed to book banning.**



**Parents have the right to guide their children's reading, but parents should not be making decisions for other parents' children.**

Specifically, a small group of parents should not dictate what books other people's children are allowed to read.<sup>2</sup>

## **Short History of Book Bans<sup>3</sup>**

2019: In the United States, people demanded the removal of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series

2013: Pakistan private schools announced bans on "I Am Malala"

\*2001: The U.S.A. PATRIOT Act, gave the FBI power to collect info about the library borrowings

1987: "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" by Maya Angelou

1933: A series of massive bonfires in Nazi Germany burned thousands of books

1624: Martin Luther's German translation of the Bible was burnt by order of the Pope

1524–26: Thousands of copies of William Tyndale's English translation of the NT were printed in Germany and smuggled into England, where they were publicly burned in 1526

259–210 B.C.: The Chinese emperor Shih Huang Ti burned all the books in his kingdom

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<sup>2</sup> <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/toolkit>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.freedomtoread.ca/resources/bannings-and-burnings-in-history/>

## Banned Book List (See handout or online)

<https://www.ministrylinks.online/books.html>

In fact, just 11 people are responsible for 60% of book bans nationwide.

**specifically on topics of race and sexuality** depriving children of the opportunity to learn from new perspectives and see themselves represented.<sup>4</sup>

**Serial filers** relied on a network of volunteers. (One man filed 92 challenges.)<sup>5</sup>

**Texas school districts received 32% of all challenges and Florida's 17%.**

Library and free speech advocates warn that the rise in book challenges, especially those targeting LGBTQ texts,

1. will imperil teachers' ability to do their jobs
2. undermine the mental health of LGBTQ+ students
3. and rob children of exposure to lives different from their own

But in interviews, book challengers say they are

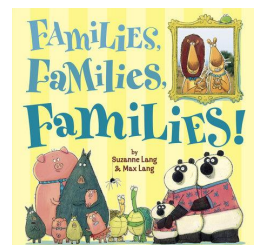
1. fighting for children's innocence,
2. sanity and well-being
3. and, some believe, for their souls.



Cindy Martin, a mother of 4 in GA, said titles available in school libraries promote casual sex and degrade women. She predicted letting children read those books will lead to: pregnancy, abortion, sexual harassment, rape and sexually transmitted diseases. "It has no place in the school system. It really has no place in society," she said. **"I am a believer in Jesus Christ,** and I feel he has put this passion in me to protect children.

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

<https://www.ministrylinks.online/books.html>



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/articles/resources-for-everyone/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/05/23/lgbtq-book-ban-challengers/>

## FAITH AND BOOKS

"In reading other books, we practice reading the Bible; and in reading the Bible, we read other books by that lens."<sup>6</sup>

The Reverend Barbara Brown Taylor has written 13 books and loves to read all kinds of books.

"We have forgotten our identity as word creatures."<sup>7</sup> God creates the world by word..." Genesis, Gospel of John, Prophetic Words...

The Word (written and Living) invites us into the mystery of a loving God and uses all kinds of books in order to do that.



***Did you know only 31% of children's books feature a female character, and only 13% feature a person of color?***



Rev. Dr. Wilda Gafney writes,<sup>8</sup> "Gender matters. Gender matters in the text, in the world, in the world of the text, and in the world of the translator. Gender matters to me and to countless numbers of women hearers and readers of the biblical text for whom it is Scripture. Gender matters significantly to those who have been and are marginalized because of gender, especially when it is done in the name of God, appealing to the Scriptures. And gender matters to men. Gender matters to hearers and readers of the Scriptures who are privileged to share the gender of the dominant portrayal of God, the majority of biblical characters, the majority of

biblical characters who have speaking parts, the majority of translators of biblical texts, and the majority of interpreters of biblical texts."

Martin Luther's book, "On Christian Liberty," says

**"A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.**

**A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."**<sup>9</sup>



## STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH BOOK BANS

<https://www.ministrylinks.online/books.html>

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<sup>6</sup> "Reading for the Love of God: How to Read as a Spiritual Practice" by Jessica Hooten Wilson

<sup>7</sup> "Reading for the Love of God: How to Read as a Spiritual Practice" by Jessica Hooten Wilson

<sup>8</sup> "A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church: Year A"

<sup>9</sup> <https://silverdalelutheran.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/On-Christian-Liberty.pdf>